



Community Resilience Project of Northern Virginia

COMING TOGETHER TO HEAL

## **FACT SHEET ABOUT THE COMMUNITY RESILIENCE PROJECT**

### **What is the Community Resilience Project of Northern Virginia?**

The Community Resilience Project of Northern Virginia is a coordinated outreach and Crisis Counseling Program in the city of Alexandria and the counties of Arlington, Fairfax, and Loudoun for individuals, families and groups most affected by the September 11 attack on the Pentagon, which was declared a disaster, and its aftermath.

### **Who is funding the Community Resilience Project?**

Funded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the Community Resilience Project of Northern Virginia is being administered through the Commonwealth of Virginia's Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation, and Substance Abuse Services, and locally, through the Community Service Boards in the City of Alexandria and the counties of Arlington, Fairfax, and Loudoun.

Funding for outreach and crisis counseling services became available through FEMA after President Bush declared these four areas, as well as Prince William County, as federal disaster areas. The declaration was made in response to the series of terrorist attacks that caused catastrophic loss of life, personal injury, and significant psychological trauma, suffering and pain.

### **Why do we need the Community Resilience Project?**

Due to the magnitude of the attack on the Pentagon and the significant and unprecedented damage received during the attacks, Arlington, Virginia and surrounding counties lack sufficient staff to provide adequate crisis counseling services to individuals and families. The need for these services, then, is being addressed through supplemental funding offered by FEMA and CMHS.

The Crisis Counseling Program that is being offered through the Community Resilience Project has been in existence nationally for more than 20 years. Its purpose continues to be to assist persons and groups affected by a large-scale disaster to cope with extraordinary stresses caused by the catastrophe. The Program is designed to provide short-term interventions and is intended to help individuals return to their pre-disaster levels of functioning.



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### **What services does the Community Resilience Project offer?**

Through the Community Resilience Project, the following services are available to people who live or work in Northern Virginia:

- **Individual Crisis Counseling** – Emotional support is offered and disaster survivors are assisted to understand their current situation, avoid additional stresses, consider their options, use healthy coping strategies, and link with other persons and agencies to promote recovery.
- **Group Crisis Counseling** – Support groups are facilitated, meetings are held with citizens, students are reached in their classrooms, affected teachers and school administrators are contacted, and families are offered the opportunity to discuss disaster-related issues. During sessions with these groups and others, the focus is on offering emotional support and assisting groups in understanding their current situation, avoiding additional stresses, considering their options, using healthy coping strategies, and linking with other persons and agencies to promote recovery. Group members may be encouraged to share experiences.
- **Educational Services** – Information is presented on the Project or crisis counseling topics. Group education is aimed at providing information to assist with coping and recovery. Presentations about stress management for adults, children, and adolescents are also available. Educational information may also be provided through mailings, trained human services personnel, and the print (flyers, brochures, posters, and newspaper articles) and the broadcast media (TV and radio advertising, public service announcement, news spots).
- **Referrals** – Most often referrals are made for those individuals whose needs are not met through the short-term interventions offered by the Program. When disaster survivors need more formal, long-term mental health services beyond the scope of the Crisis Counseling Program, referrals are made to appropriate agencies or mental health professionals. For other types of long-term needs, such as housing or economic needs, Community Resilience Project staff refer individuals to specific disaster services.



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### **What exactly do Community Resilience Project Crisis Counselors do?**

Crisis Counselors work primarily in the community and even in homes. Examples of the types of activities you would expect Counselors to engage in are:

- Listening in a supportive manner to individuals' concerns
- Helping disaster individuals recognize that, in most cases, their emotional reactions are normal
- Assisting survivors to reduce additional stress by organizing and prioritizing day-to-day and recovery-related tasks
- Helping individuals to understand and recognize the range of reactions to trauma, such as frustration confusion and anger
- Assisting individuals to draw on their own strengths and develop healthy coping mechanisms, permitting them to resume their pre-disaster level of functioning
- Sensitively and empathically encouraging individuals to grieve their losses
- Systematically drawing upon an array of recovery resources for appropriate referrals

Community Resilience Project Crisis Counselors are trained to provide services to disaster survivors who are assumed to have been functioning adequately before the disaster and not in need of continuous mental health treatment. Because the Crisis Counseling Program was not meant to establish or replace needed mental health services, Community Resilience Project Counselors work collaboratively with mental health professionals to coordinate comprehensive services for individuals who have serious mental impairments that either pre-date the disaster or were exacerbated by it. Additionally, whenever possible, Counselors work to re-establish client relationships with prior case managers or providers.

### **Who can receive Crisis Counseling Services and where?**

Anyone who lives or works in Northern Virginia and has been directly or indirectly affected by the Pentagon disaster and its aftermath, including threats of bio-terrorism, are eligible to receive outreach and Crisis Counseling services. Community Resilience Project staff are available to provide services in a number of places, including homes, businesses, elementary, middle and high schools, universities, places of worship, disaster recovery centers, shelters, and community centers. Community Resilience Project staff will work with you to schedule programs at the convenience of individuals or groups.

### **What should we expect of most people who receive Crisis Counseling services through the Community Resilience Project?**

Most individuals will resume productive and fulfilling lives if they are given support, assistance, and information to cope in a way that respects their education, developmental stage and culture.



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### **Why now?**

As we approach the anniversary of the attacks, there will be even more reminders, such as graphic images of the attacks on TV, more media coverage, and more discussion among friends and co-workers.

Some may be surprised that their reactions to these reminders are stronger now than they have been in recent months. Memories of the event may become more vivid and clear. In fact, those who had no initial reaction may have a strong reaction now, such as being unable to sleep or feeling anxious, sad, afraid, or angry—and other physical and emotional reactions, which are very normal.

On this anniversary, it is more important than ever to make sure that you will be able to recognize these reactions in yourself and your loved ones, and to know where to turn for information, education, counseling, and referrals.

**For more information**, call toll free 1-866-400-2951.